

No.	Division.	Number of cases in which compensation was fixed at rupees																									Total.
		26 and under.	27 "	28 "	29 "	30 "	31 "	32 "	33 "	34 "	35 "	36 "	37 "	38 "	39 "	40 "	41 "	42 "	43 "	44 "	45 "	46 "	47 "	48 "	49 "	50 "	
1	East Khândesh..	2	2	1	..	1	..	1	1	..	1	2	3	666
2	West Khândesh..	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	..	1	1	7	575
3	Nâsik ..	..	1	3	..	10	1	..	..	1	1	4	..	..	..	6	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	1,063
4	Ahmednagar ..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,760
5	Poona ..	3	1	1	..	2	..	1	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,277
6	Sâtâra ..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	741
7	Sholâpur..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	1,565
	Total ..	6	5	5	1	13	3	2	1	2	4	6	1	1	2	7	2	2	..	..	..	..	1	1	10	9,647

The very large falling of, *viz.* 57 per cent., in the number of cases dealt with under Section 67 of the Forest Act, in the East Khándesh Division, during the twelve months 1st April 1892 to 31st March 1893, compared with the twelve months preceding, is to be accounted for by offences of illicit grazing not being treated, as before, under Section 67, subsequent to the issue of Government Resolution No. 8626, dated 3rd November 1892: and some cases of breach of the rules published under Section 41 of the Forest Act were let off with a warning instead of being disposed of under Section 67.

In the West Khándesh, Násik, and Poona divisions no case was compounded under Section 67 after the receipt, by the Divisional Forest Officer, of Government Resolution No. 7907, dated 6th October 1892. And in the other divisions, Sátára and Sholápur, very few cases were disposed of under this provision of the forest law after November 1892.

67. The District Magistrate of Poona has issued circular instruction to his subordinate Magistrates to decline to issue process if there has been inordinate delay in bringing complaints before them in connection with forest offences, and has told them that a delay of over six weeks from the date of the offence should ordinarily be considered "inordinate delay;" at the same time he has specially warned them that when from the papers the delay seems to be satisfactorily accounted for, they are not to hesitate to issue process. A period of limitation cannot, it would seem, be prescribed legally, and a Magistrate could not well refuse to take up a complaint on such grounds. But the order has undoubtedly worked beneficially in the Poona District, for it has stirred up the forest subordinates to be more prompt and punctual in treatment of forest crime and to avoid procrastinating and vexatious delays, which undoubtedly contribute to the failure of prosecutions, by giving time to the accused persons to square hostile witnesses, and by making such ancient history of the offence, that the witnesses, who mostly belong to the uneducated classes, forget the facts, and under cross-examination by astute vakils come hopelessly to grief over salient points in the prosecution evidence.

68. Every forest offence is required to be reported to the Divisional Forest Officer by the Range Forest Officer, and the order in writing of the former has to be obtained before a prosecution can be instituted; and this precaution is of itself productive of delay in lodging complaints. At the same time it gives time for the accused persons to get at the prosecution witnesses; and it is undoubtedly one of the chief reasons for a considerable percentage of acquittals in prosecuted cases, for the witnesses who have deposed against the accused when the preliminary inquiries were made, turn round and tell a different tale when placed in the witness box before the trying Magistrate. However, notwithstanding these disadvantages, the precaution is judicious, and works beneficially on the whole; but it should be taken into consideration when a Forest Officer is being judged as to his treatment of forest offences by the percentage of acquittals of cases prosecuted in his division.

(2). Protection from fire.

69. The following statement gives the results of fire conservancy in the several divisions of the Central Circle during the forest year, as compared with

those of the preceding year of twelve months, and it should be remembered that two hot seasons or periods of dry months are included in the forest year when the forests are more especially liable to be fired :—

No.	Division.	Forest area placed under protection against fire.		Acreage burned.		Percentage burned.		Expenditure incurred in rupees.	
		1891-92.	1892-93.	1891-92.	1892-93.	1891-92.	1892-93.	1891-92.	1892-93.
1	East Khándesh ...	510,796	516,315	33,766	48,788	6.6	9.4	176	281
2	West Khándesh ...	1,088,625	1,076,136	639,312	288,000	58.7	26.7	226	904
3	Násik ...	818,499	818,887	11,321	7,870	1.3	0.9	128	166
4	Ahmednagar ...	541,524	541,814	374	2,898	0.06	0.5	...	...
5	Poona ...	476,645	476,169	3,805	6,300	0.79	1.3	11	8
6	Sátára ...	438,684	444,844	993	2,057	0.22	0.4	...	6
7	Sholápur ...	177,716	178,035	222	860	0.12	0.4	...	...
	Total ...	4,052,489	4,052,200	689,793	356,773	17.02	8.8	541	1,365

70. It will be perceived that there was a marked improvement during the forest year notwithstanding the disadvantages mentioned above. But the year has been a favourable one for fire conservancy, as storms of rain occurred frequently in different parts of the Deccan between November 1892 and June 1893, and the grass and inflammable undergrowth was often wetted and naturally protected against consumption by fire. No special measures beyond the burning, by forest guards with the help of hired labour here and there, of fire-paths on the sides of high roads, cart-tracks and foot-paths and outer boundary lines of reserved forest and surrounding camping grounds, &c., were adopted in any of the divisions of the Central Circle, except in the two divisions of Khándesh, where, in addition to these ordinary precautions, internal fire-lines were burnt across the more extensive forests in the Sátputás and elsewhere, at intervals of about 1,000 feet. The system of reporting, by means of a post card, to the Collector, immediately on the occurrence of a fire in any forest, has been introduced in all the divisions of the Central Circle, as directed in Government Resolution No. 757, dated 27th January 1893, in the Revenue Department.

71. In the East Khándesh Division 49 fires occurred, and 48 of these burnt only 9,788 acres of reserved forest, but one disastrous fire in the Sátputás traversed no less than 39,000 acres and raised the total area burnt in the division beyond the acreage of the preceding year. This fire originated through careless smoking on the part of three Tádvi Bhils, who had gone into the reserved forests of the Yával Sátputás to exercise privileges of cutting and removing timber, of which they are in enjoyment as a tribal concession. A gale of wind was blowing at the time, and although upwards of 300 men attacked the fire, it could not be overcome until it had travelled over a wide extent of forest; the fire-paths were of very little impediment to its course. The three men were prosecuted, with the effect that one was convicted and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment for one month and to pay a fine of Rs. 50, and the case against the two was still pending when the year closed. Out of the 48 fire cases of the division the offenders were discovered and prosecuted in 14, with the result that convictions were secured in 8 (one of these got off subsequently on appeal), 2 were acquitted, and 4 were awaiting trial at the end of the year.

72. Fire conservancy in West Khándesh has been very successful. Fire traces of a total length of 1,565 miles were burnt at a cost of Rs. 885, and during the fifteen months 122 fires were reported, and they are estimated to have burnt 288,000 acres against 116 fires of 639,312 acres of the preceding year. In connection with 25 fires, the persons who caused them were discovered; 1 case was compounded and 24 were prosecuted, with the result that 35 men were convicted and punished with fines aggregating Rs. 194 and with rigorous imprisonment of one month and three days in the aggregate. * * *

In reviewing the divisional administration report the Collector has recorded that "the system of internal fire-paths has been a success; for though there were more fires this year than last, the area burnt was not half so much, showing that the fires did not spread as they did last year, and it is the spreading of a fire that the paths are intended to prevent."

73. Fires occurred in all the ranges of the Násik Division, but there has been a great improvement in the vigilance and activity of the forest subordinates, and also of forest villagers, in discovering and attacking them.

74. In the Ahmednagar Division 78 fires were started against 29 of the previous year; and they overran 2,898 acres, or about eight times more space than during the previous year. The damage done to forest property by these fires was estimated at Rs. 169; and in connection with this the Collector of Ahmednagar has recorded: "The Collector had occasion to remark when forwarding certain returns of forest fires that the loss of produce assigned to this cause was out of all proportion small when compared with the estimates of damage done to the same class of produce by trespassing cattle. The object of the forest subordinates in depreciating the former kind of loss, was of course obvious, and the Collector was glad to find that the Conservator caused the correction of this disingenuousness."

75. Fire conservancy in the Poona Division has not been so satisfactory as could be desired, the area traversed having been 2,495 acres greater than that of the previous year. The fires have chiefly taken place in the ghát talukas; and in the majority of cases have been due to carelessness and negligence in ráb-burning, the villagers taking no reasonable precautions to prevent fire spreading from their fields to the adjoining forests. Several cases in which carelessness and negligence in ráb-burning were traced to the offenders, were sent up for trial, but the Magistrates refused to convict, on the ground that no rules have been passed under Section 25 (b) of the Forest Act as amended. * - *

The most important case of firing the forest occurred in the Khed Range, where one Bálárám Bhaurám, an agent of the Commissariat hay contractor, was apprehended in the act of firing the grass in the Kohinde Budruk reserved forest, on or about the 8th of May 1893, in order to conceal malpractices in connection with the exploitation of grass, and he was sent up for trial before the 2nd Class Magistrate of Khed, who convicted and sentenced the accused to six months' rigorous imprisonment, and a fine of Rs. 100. On appeal, however, to the Sub-divisional Magistrate, the case was committed to the Sessions, where, unfortunately, the accused was acquitted.

76. In the Sátára Division an area of a little more than 3 square miles was burnt by 97 fires, of which the Jávli Range had 20, Mahábaleshvar 16, Pátan 15, Shirála 6 and Wái 5; thus 62 fires broke out in the ghát ranges and the remainder in the eastern ranges. The forest subordinates were very watchful and active; for in 41 out of the 97 fires the incendiary was caught: of these 9 were let off with a warning, as boys were the culprits: in the other 32 cases prosecutions were ordered, and at the end of the season 13 convictions and only 1 acquittal had been recorded. 18 cases remained awaiting trial.

77. A little more than a square mile was burnt in the Sholápur Division; and the cause of the fires is attributed to careless smoking by persons passing through reserved forests, or to sparks from passing railway engines.

78.—The entire area in charge of the Forest Department, whether it be legally constituted reserved forest, or—protected forest, or provisionally notified forest lands, is brought under fire-protection directly it is placed in the care of the forest subordinates.

(3). *Regulation of Grazing and Protection from Cattle.*

79. Grazing is regulated under the rules passed by Government in their Resolution No. 3595 of 23rd May 1890; and for this purpose portions of forest areas are kept open during a part of the year, and are available to all local cattle, including agricultural cattle and other privileged cattle which are permitted to graze in such portions, some free of charge, some on payment of fees on the permit system. Cattle from outside the district also are admitted to graze on higher rates of fees if the forests can support them. In addition thereto, some "valuable kurans," fodder reserves, the tree growth in which has attained a